

News from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs

The Schwarzenegger Administration has now been in place for a little more than 4 years and much has been accomplished here at the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA). A new State Veterans Cemetery has been built, three new Veterans Homes are under construction, two more Veterans Homes are in the planning stages, numerous remodeling and maintenance projects at the veterans homes have been completed or are underway, the Department's Strategic Plan has been updated and is being implemented, new leadership has been brought on board in many of the program areas, we have made great progress on our QVMB issue with Congress and a sense of stability and progress has now become part of CDVA's culture.

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USDVA Increases Travel Reimbursement for Eligible Veterans

More than a million eligible veterans saw their mileage reimbursement more than double starting February 1, for travel to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) medical facilities.

"This increase helps veterans -- especially those living in rural areas -- offset some of the gasoline costs as they travel to USDVA's world-class health care," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Increasing the mileage reimbursement is one more step by VA to help veterans access the health care they deserve."

The 2008 appropriations act provided funding for USDVA to increase the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate from 11 cents per mile to 28.5 cents per mile. The increase went into effect on February 1.

While increasing the payment, the USDVA, as mandated by law, also equally increased the deductible amounts applied to certain mileage reimbursements. The new deductibles are \$7.77 for a one-way trip, \$15.54 for a roundtrip,

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News from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs cont:

As Americans and Californians, we will always be indebted to those upon whose shoulders we stand; those who prepared the groundwork for the action and progress we are embracing today. However, we could not have achieved this progress without a Governor who is 100% behind our veterans and 100% supportive of the men and women who wear the uniform of our Armed Forces. Governor Schwarzenegger is such a Governor and he is a leader focused on action.

And in keeping the focus on action, our watchword for 2008 is ACT – Action, Communication and Teamwork. We have tremendous challenges and opportunities ahead to ACT in our veterans homes, veterans services, and our CalVet Farm and Home Loan program. In light of these challenges and opportunities, we look forward to this year with great anticipation.

I want to thank all of those with whom we work in advance; our County Veteran Service Officers, the USDVA staff in VISN 21 and 22 and in the Central Office, our Veteran Service Organizations and our colleagues in State government, for their partnership in carrying out our mission of serving California's veterans and their families.

Tom Johnson
Secretary



USDVA Deputy Secretary Mansfield Honored

USDVA Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Gordon H. Mansfield was named as the first recipient of the "Robert Dole National Award for Service" on Jan. 28 during the annual conference of the Military Health System, which provides health care for the Department of Defense.



L. to r., Sen. Robert Dole, USDVA Dep. Secretary Gordon Mansfield, Dep. Secretary of Defense Gordon England

"Gordon Mansfield has devoted much of his adult life to serving this nation and its veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Making him the first recipient of this honor sets the bar high for those who follow."

Mansfield, a long-time official with the Paralyzed Veterans of America and the second ranking officer in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs since January 2004, described former Senator Dole as "one of my personal heroes."

A combat-wounded veteran of the Vietnam War, Mansfield has also served as an assistant secretary in the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He was honored as Outstanding Disabled Veteran of the Year in 2006 at the national convention of Disabled American Veterans.

Five Years of USDVA Health Care for Combat Veterans

Military veterans who served in combat since Nov. 11, 1998, including veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, are now eligible for five years of free medical care for most conditions from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). This measure increases a two-year limit that has been in effect nearly a decade.

"By their service and their sacrifice, America's newest combat veterans have earned this special eligibility period for USDVA's world-class health care," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.

The five-year deadline has no effect upon veterans with medical conditions related to their military service. Veterans may apply at any time after their discharge from the military -- even decades later -- for medical care for service-connected health problems.

The new provision, part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008 signed by President Bush on Jan. 28, 2008, applies to care in a USDVA hospital, outpatient clinic or nursing home. It also extends USDVA dental benefits -- previously limited to 90 days after discharge for most veterans -- to 180 days.

Combat veterans who were discharged between Nov. 11, 1998 and Jan. 16, 2003, and who never took advantage of the USDVA's health care system, have until Jan. 27, 2011 to qualify for free USDVA health care.

The five-year window is also open to activated Reservists and members of the National Guard, if they served in a theater of combat operations after Nov. 11, 1998 and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

Veterans who take advantage of this five-year window to receive USDVA health care can continue to receive care after five years, although they may have to pay copayments for medical problems unrelated to their military service. Copayments range from \$8 for a 30-day supply of prescription medicine to \$1,024 for the first 90 days of inpatient care each year.

with a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month. However, these deductibles can be waived if they cause a financial hardship to the veteran.



JAIME TODD APPOINTED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE BARSTOW VETERANS HOME



From 2005 to 2007, Todd served as chief operating officer for California PEO Homes. From 2000 to 2005, he was interim administrator in multiple facilities with expertise as a turnaround specialist in long-term care. From 1998 to 2000, he was administrator for The Episcopal Home.

Prior to that, Todd was an administrator for LTC Hospitals from 1994 to 1998 and director of social services from 1991 to 1994. From 1983 to 1987, he served as a corpsman in the U.S. Navy.



JOHN KING APPOINTED DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR VETERANS SERVICES



King served as director of the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs from 1997 to 2005, before retiring from state service and starting his own business. Since 2005, King has owned and operated King Associates, which reviews, assesses and master plans housing developments for low income veterans.

He also held the positions of deputy director of administration for the Washington State Attorney General's Office from 1995 to 1997 and deputy director then acting director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture from 1993 to 1995. Prior to that, King worked in the Washington State Department of Corrections from 1982 to 1993, where he served as director and assistant director of the division of management and budget, legislative liaison and internal audit manager. His experience also includes work in the Washington State Senate's Ways and Means Committee and the Department of Social and Health Services. King is a disabled veteran of the Vietnam War and served in the U.S. Army from 1967 to 1969.

Veterans Homes of California Census as of February 26, 2008



YOUNTVILLE	Total 1048
<i>Domiciliary</i>	<i>651</i>
<i>Assisted Living (RCFE)</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Skilled Nursing (SNF)</i>	<i>202</i>
<i>Intermediate Care (ICF)</i>	<i>145</i>
<i>Acute Care</i>	<i>5</i>



BARSTOW	Total 155
<i>Domiciliary</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Intermediate Care (ICF)</i>	<i>55</i>



CHULA VISTA	Total 342
<i>Domiciliary</i>	<i>149</i>
<i>Assisted Living (RCFE)</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Skilled Nursing (SNF)</i>	<i>156</i>

LOUIS KOFF APPOINTED ADMINISTRATOR OF THE WEST LOS ANGELES VETERANS HOME



Koff has worked for the California Department of Veterans Affairs since 2003 and previously served as administrator of the Barstow Veterans Home. Koff was the skilled nursing administrator for the Yountville Veterans' Home from 2003 to 2004.

From 1992 to 2002, he was the administrator of ParkVista at Morningside and from 1977 to 1980 and 1981 to 1992, he worked for Eskaton Health Corporation in numerous management positions including administrator and regional manager. Koff has 30 years of experience in long term care program administration.



STANLEY OPPEGARD APPOINTED DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR VETERANS HOMES

Oppegard has served as the interim chief executive officer for the Modoc Medical Center since October 2007 and has managed the health care consulting practice, Stan Oppegard & Associates, since 2001. From 2006 to 2007, Oppegard was interim chief executive officer for Mountain Community Medical Services, formerly Trinity Hospital.

Oppegard was interim chief executive officer for the Seneca Healthcare District from 2004 to 2005 and president of the Carson Valley Medical Center from 2000 to 2001. Prior to that, he served as vice president and chief operating officer for Methodist Hospital under Catholic Healthcare West from 1993 to 2000 and president and chief executive officer for the Methodist Hospital from 1972 to 1993. Additionally, he spent five years at the South Coast Medical Center in Laguna, CA. Oppegard retired from the U.S. Navy as a Lieutenant after serving between 1961 and 1965.

